

THE BOOK OF THE HAND.

A LEAF OF NOMADIC LORE.

Modern palmistry, as is well known, owes most of its development to D'Arpentigny. This gentleman was a French captain, and while serving in the Spanish wars, had his attention accidentally directed to the science of chiromancy. One day strolling along the roads of Andalusia, he was accosted by a gipsy, who asked him to draw a horoscope. The girl, who was of Moorish blood, was very beautiful, and begging him with much importunity, D'Arpentigny smilingly consented to submit his hand to her investigation. He listened to her grave recital of some wonderful prediction...

The main principles and the data of this work have been translated and embodied in a book entitled "Modern Palmistry," first published in London, and reissued in this country. The volume contains, also, outlines of the system of Debarrolles, together with a sketch of the science as it existed in ancient times, and as it is now practised among the gipsies. With a good deal that is purely fanciful and absurd, the book combines a little that is suggestive and of real scientific value. It would be absurd to suppose that a system which has been practised among men for some four thousand years, is entirely without a foundation in truth. The volume, however, will prove principally desirable as a means of whiling away an idle hour, and as a guide for those who wish to play at hand-reading and fortune-telling.

The modern science of chiromancy, as established by D'Arpentigny, classifies hands in seven orders—the elementary, with a large palm; the necessary or spatulate-shaped; the artistic or conical; the useful or square; the philosophical or knotted; the psychological or pointed; and the mixed hand.

IN THE PALM OF THE HAND is placed the sign of the bodily desires, and, to a certain degree, that of the intensity of the intellectual aptitudes which these desires determine. Weak, thin, narrow, and feeble, it indicates a weak and unsuggestive temperament; an imagination without warmth and power; instincts without capacity. If it is pliant, of a suitable thickness and surface—that is to say, in harmony with the proportions of the fingers and thumb, there will be an aptitude for all the pleasures of life, and the feelings, easily excited, will give scope to the imagination. Should it present developments too marked, without ceasing to be pliant, system and sensuality will be the dominant inclinations. Lastly, if its largeness is altogether out of proportion with the other parts of the hand—if it joins to an excessive hardness an excessive thickness—then it will indicate instincts approaching to an unthinking animalism.

FINGERS AND THEIR SIGNS. Fingers are divided into three general orders: spatulate, enlarging more or less at the point; square, with phalanges of uniform size, neither enlarging nor tapering; and conical, more or less apexed. They are further subdivided according as they are smooth or have knotted joints (knobs such as the eye may readily and easily perceive).

SPATULATE FINGERS are of two kinds, smooth and knotted, and both indicate aptitude for bodily activity and manual occupation, useful and material knowledge, the love of horses, dogs, hunting, sailing, war, agriculture, commerce. The smooth are distinguished for inspiration rather than reason; fancy and sentiment rather than knowledge; synthesis rather than analysis. Intellectual taste belongs peculiarly to the knotted, and grace to the smooth. The smooth work by inspiration, passion, instinct, intuition; the knotted by calculation, reason, deduction, and probability.

The hand with the smooth fingers will especially excel in the locomotive arts and the applied sciences, in which spontaneous dexterity and genius prevail over combination. The hands spatulate with knots indicate the practical mechanical sciences, as statics, dynamics, navigation, architecture, surveying, Vauban, Mouton, Carnot, Colburn, Arago, etc.

THE SQUARE FINGERS indicate, according as they are smooth or knotted, a taste for moral, political, and social sciences, or for grammar, logic, geometry, and some departments of poetry and philosophy. To the square phalanges are due the theories and methods of administration; they do not attain to high poetry, but letters, the sciences, and some of the arts, carry the name of Aristotle inscribed on their banner. This type dazzles not by brilliant fancy, but loves literature for its own sake, history, social sciences, etc. Descartes and Pascal had knotted fingers; Chaptal and Chateaubriand smooth ones.

In France there are more square hands than spatulate; that is to say, more people of tongue than of hand, more brains organized for the theory of science than men well suited to apply them. THE ARTIST HAND, with smooth fingers, of which the nailed phalange presents the form of a cone, or a filbert, is devoted to the plastic arts—painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry of the imagination and of the senses, worship of the beautiful in solid and visible form, romantic incidents, antipathy to rigid induction, enthusiasm, fanaticism. With certain modifications, form, the artist hand has three different tendencies. With phalange small, thin, and moderately developed palm, it has the beautiful in form for its end; broad, thick,

and short, with a large thumb, it aims at riches, greatness, fortune—the Napoleon hand; large and firm, it tends to sensual pleasures. All three forms obey inspiration, and are comparatively inapt for the mechanic arts. The first proceeds by enthusiasm, the second by stratagem, the last by the promptings of pleasure. A palm moderately large, with smooth fingers, a feeble thumb, rather conical phalanges—that is, strong passions without sufficient moral restraint—a mind wanting in power to subjugate the senses, and based on a groundwork of moderately intellectual ideas. Such is, in general, the character of the artist.

THE PHILOSOPHIC HAND. The other variety of the conical has fingers knotted, with the nail phalanges partly square, partly conical. It indicates a genius turned towards speculative ideas, meditation, deep philosophical science, and close, inductive reasoning, a love of absolute truth, poetry of reason and thought.

The two classes into which D'Arpentigny divides philosophers are the sensualists and idealists. It is the old distinction as to ideas being received by the senses from without or within. Locke and Condillac have the phalanged fingers of the sensualists, and Descartes, Malebranche, and Leibnitz have the phalanges of the idealists. It is, however, only the hand of the rationalist and sensualist in its natural form that is dealt with, which has a palm moderately large and elastic, with knotted fingers, the end phalange partly square, partly conical, and forming, by reason of the two knots, a kind of oval spatulate; the thumb large, and indicating as much logic as decision—that is, formed of two phalanges of equal length, or nearly so.

The philosophy of useful and spatulated hands embraces facts, practical ideas, things, politics; that of the conical and pointed hands, creeds, speculative ideas, art; knotted hands, partly square, partly conical, are eclectic, and it is for this reason that they have received the name of philosophic hands. Very large, all these hands tend to analysis; very small, to synthesis. With a large thumb, they think with the heart; with a large thumb, with the head. It is with churchmen as with philosophers and artists. The knowledge and direction of men belong to the northern types; of souls, to the southern. To the former belong science and learning; to the latter, faith. The one has more love, the other more authority. The spatulate think of the world and the church; the conical, of heaven and God.

THE PSYCHICAL HAND. This last hand has smooth fingers terminating in a tapering cone. It belongs to contemplation, religiousness, ideality, carelessness of material interests, poetry of the soul and of the heart, a desire after all kinds of beauty in form and in essence. Thus, to the square and spatulated fingers God has given matter and reality—that is to say, industry, the necessary and useful arts, the theory of things; to the conical and pointed fingers, He has opened the illimitable field of imagination; to the conical, in giving them an insight into the externally beautiful—art; to the pointed fingers, intuition of the true and the beautiful internally—poetry, and idealistic philosophy. This is, of all others, the most beautiful and the most rare; for rarely is a condition of beauty. It is small and fine, relatively to the palm; medium palm, the fingers without knots, or very moderately undulated, the outer phalange long and filberted, the thumb small and elegant; large, and with knots, it has strength and combination, but it wants simplicity. You have seen the world given up to spatulate hands, progress, industry, war, tumult, cultivation of power and material interests. You have seen it committed to the artistic hands, producing romantic enterprises, imprudence, brilliant folly, splendid misery, and fanaticism of form. You have seen it given up to the square phalanges, fanaticism of method, narrow and universal despotism. You have seen it given up to the philosophic hands, the fanaticism of science, doubt, emotion, and liberty, without standing point. Alas! hitherto in Europe, the psychical hands have not been able to arrive at dominion; perhaps have ever disdained, in the high sphere where their genius dwells, the material interests.

The psychical hands are immensely numerous in Southern Asia; hence the genius essentially religious, contemplative, and poetical of the nations that dwell there; hence their respect for maxims, and their disdain for methods; hence the preference they give to virtue, the source of repose—to science, the source of progress; hence the languishing condition of the arts, professions, and agriculture; hence theocratic and despotic governments, forms necessary for a people to whom reason and action are painful. It is in dreamy Asia, the land of immense empires, whence have arisen all great religions; and it is in restless, laborious Europe, country of small republics, whence have arisen all the philosophers that have looked those religions in the face, and have told them of their deeds. In Europe the temple rises out of society, in Asia, society rises out of the temple.

HANDS FOR MUSICIANS. If there is any one art more than another, a genius for which might be inferred from the make of the hand, it is evidently that of the musician. A brilliant player must have a hand adapted to his art. A man with short, pudgy fingers, however much he may have the soul of music within him, must forever remain the "mute inglorious." A rigid attention to measure being the necessary condition of musical rhythm, it is among the square fingers that are found the most correct and skilled musicians. Instrumentation belongs especially to the spatulate fingers, and song to the pointed. The hand of the eminent pianist, Liszt, being very large, it is by finish; his fingers very knotty, it is by precision; his phalanges very spatulate, it is by power, that he raises the admiration of his audience.

His hand is not only that of an instrumentalist, it is also that of a mathematician, of a mechanic, and by extension that of a metaphysician—that is to say, of a man more reflective than impulsive, more skillful than impassioned, more head than heart.

THE THUMB. "In want of other proofs," said Newton, "the thumb would convince me of the existence of a God; as without the thumb the hand would be a defective and incomplete instrument, so without the moral will, logic, decision, faculties of which the thumb is different degrees offer the different signs, the most fertile and the most brilliant mind would only be a pit without worth." In common with animals, we have an instinctive will, an instinctive logic, and an instinctive decision; but the thumb alone represents the reasoning will, reasoning logic, and reasoning decision. The superior animal is in the hand, the man is in the thumb. The thumb of apes, very little flexible, and, therefore, opposable, is looked upon by some naturalists as a movable talon; while, on the contrary, the human thumb is placed and organized so as to be able to act always in a sense against the other fingers, it, therefore, symbolizes, as I have said, the inner or moral sense that we oppose to our inclinations, and to the allurements of

our instinct and senses. Proofs of this abound. Born idiots come into the world without thumbs, or with them powerless and inert, which is natural, because where the substance is absent the symbol must fail. Until they arrive at a time when a ray of intellect comes to their aid, they constantly keep their hands shut with the fingers above the thumb, but in proportion as the mind develops with the body, the thumb in its turn shuts over the fingers.

The epileptic in their fits shut the thumb before the fingers, which signifies that that malady, which is experienced before being felt, reaches the principle by which we think before that by which we feel. At the approach of the great darkness, the thumb of the dying, as taken with some vague fear, takes refuge under the fingers, which announces the near end. Man alone, because he has a thumb—that is to say, reason—knows death. At the root of the thumb sits the sign of the reasoning will, the intensity of which you will measure by the length and thickness of that root—the mount of Venus of chiromancy. In the first phalange is the sign of logic—that is to say, of perception, of judgment, of reason; and in the second is that of invention, decision, and the initiative.

People with small thumbs are governed by the heart, source of tolerance, and breathe more freely in an atmosphere of sentiment than in that of thought, and see better with the eye of the moment than with that of reflection. People with large thumbs are governed by the head, source of exclusiveness; they breathe more freely in an atmosphere of thought than in that of sentiment; they see better with the eye of reflection than with that of the moment.

Sonvraff, celebrated for the strength of his will; Danton, that magnanimous soul, who took upon him the disgrace of a crime to save his country; Galileo, Scroates, Newton, Leibnitz, Saint Simon, Fourier, Owen—those profound reasoners, those bold innovators—had infallibly very small thumbs. Voltaire, the man of the world, whose heart was subject to his brain, had enormous thumbs, as proved by his statue in the Théâtre Français.

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